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FM AMEMBASSY LUSAKA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5699  
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE  
RHMFISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE IMMEDIATE  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LUSAKA 000429

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/14/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [SADC](#) [ZA](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: SADC EMERGENCY SUMMIT: MWANAWASA TELLS ALL

REF: A. LUSAKA 427  
[1](#)B. LUSAKA 424  
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Classified By: Ambassador Carmen Martinez for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. In an April 15 conversation, President Mwanawasa shared his thoughts on the recently concluded Southern African Development Community (SADC) Heads of State Summit. He described the Summit as a signal to Mugabe that SADC will not support him unconditionally. He characterized Mbeki as counterproductive and insincere. He observed that many SADC leaders had changed their minds about the situation in Zimbabwe after hearing firsthand about the electoral irregularities. He urged the Zimbabwean delegation to extend greater freedom to the press and warned of wide-spread violence. He thanked the USG for its discretion, to avoid the perception that SADC is responding to outside pressure. Mwanawasa described the Summit as "a good beginning," but said that SADC would need to continue its involvement, both privately and publicly. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) I spoke with President Mwanawasa at length this morning regarding what transpired behind closed doors at the April 12 SADC Summit in Lusaka. Mwanawasa said the Summit had "achieved its purpose" and signaled to Mugabe "that SADC will not always support him." Mwanawasa said that SADC has a responsibility to uphold the rule of law, which Mugabe had violated during the Zimbabwean election by excluding candidates from the process. In Mwanawasa's view, SADC needed to insist that election authorities conduct the recount "under the rule of law."

[1](#)3. (C) The President drew my attention to "something that was not in the communique." He said that the SADC Heads of State had agreed that the press must have free access to the ongoing electoral process. When I asked if this included Western and other international press, he said "press means press." Responding to my question of whether the Zimbabwean delegation understood that definition, Mwanawasa answered "the Zimbabwean delegation took it on board but they did not want to show it." Mwanawasa said he hoped that the Zimbabwean delegation would be truthful in recounting the meeting to Mugabe. "After all," he said, "we spent more than 12 hours talking, so they cannot say we discussed nothing."

[1](#)4. (C) I asked the President if he had heard from Mugabe in the aftermath of the Summit. Mwanawasa said he had not, and dismissed Mugabe's excuse for not coming "because he was not consulted." Mwanawasa said he tried to talk to him, but Mugabe would not take his call when he telephoned to invite him personally. He said he had consulted with Mbeki over the

invite, and Mbeki had given him Mugabe's phone number but, when he called, Mugabe "remained unavailable." Mwanawasa said he believes Mugabe will eventually speak with him but, for now, he must "allow tempers to cool."

15. (C) Mwanawasa told me that Mbeki had not been supportive and that he and Mbeki had "quarreled" over the role of opposition candidates Tsvangirai and Makoni. Mwanawasa said that at the beginning of the closed door session, Mbeki argued that they should not allow Tsvangirai and Makoni to participate because they were not government representatives. Mwanawasa explained that this represented a reversal in Mbeki's position, and Mwanawasa, who from the beginning had not thought it proper to invite the opposition candidates, said "I lost my cool." Mwanawasa told Mbeki that he was "making it look like the decision to invite the opposition candidates was solely my idea." Mwanawasa accused Mbeki of being "insincere" and asked him why he changed his mind. Mbeki, very angry, refused to answer.

16. (C) After many hours of heated argument, the group agreed to move to another room to allow willing Heads of State to speak with the opposition candidates. Mwanawasa said that all eight Heads of State came to the gathering, which he described as a productive ninety-minute meeting. Makoni and Tsvangirai recounted the many ways in which they and their

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supporters had been excluded from various phases of the electoral process. According to Mwanawasa, many of the Heads of State who had been "reluctant to condemn Mugabe," changed their minds after hearing firsthand about the irregularities that had taken place.

17. (C) Tsvangirai and Makoni told the SADC leaders that they had "pinned up" the results for the public in order to

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provide a record of the actual vote count. Mwanawasa thought that this would help ensure an accurate recount, which would lead to a run-off. The President expressed his concern that in the event of a run-off, there will be increased levels of violence and conjectured that opposition party members' frustration could "lead to violence on both sides."

18. (C) Mwanawasa said that the Summit was "a good beginning" but that SADC had to continue to be active, both publicly and behind the scenes. He said SADC must solve and "be seen to be solving" the problem because "by doing nothing we invite outside intervention." He said that the SADC Heads of State considered this a "point well taken." Mwanawasa also thanked me for the USG expressions of support for his initiative in convening the Summit. He said he personally appreciated that we had made our approaches to SADC in "a discreet manner," because it was important that SADC be seen as acting independently. It would be bad he said, if the issue turned into "the West versus SADC".

19. (C) Comment: President Mwanawasa seems determined to continue to press for active SADC involvement in resolving the Zimbabwe impasse. He recognizes that although the Summit was a good beginning, SADC's credibility is at risk if it does not produce concrete results, especially given the high probability of wide-spread violence in the case of a run-off. If he is correct that Mugabe now understands that SADC will no longer blindly support his actions, perhaps this can be another point of pressure on Mugabe and the ZANU-PF. If, that is, Mbeki can be neutralized. Meanwhile, Mwanawasa has somewhat restored his credibility and respect within SADC that was lost at the August 2007 Summit, while gaining some esteem in the West.

MARTINEZ